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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1617

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 6718

RHMFIASS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY

RHMFIASS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHMFIASS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000021

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2014

TAGS: PREL PGOV TU

SUBJECT: FM DAVUTOGLU REBUILDING HIS MINISTRY IN HIS IMAGE

REF: ANKARA 1717

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Foreign Minister Davutoglu used his opening speech to the January 4-8 Turkish ambassadors' conference to reinforce his vision of an activist diplomacy that asserts the country's profile regionally and beyond. He appears to be making progress selling that vision to a generation of Turkish diplomats that had been schooled to view Turkey's Ottoman past as a constraint on their freedom of action abroad. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) For the second time since Prime Minister Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in November 2002, a Turkish foreign minister has summoned his ambassadors from around the world to a conference in Ankara to discuss Turkey's foreign policy priorities. Like his predecessor, Ali Babacan, during the July 2008 ambassadorial conference, Foreign Minister Davutoglu, in his opening session speech to the January 4 - 8 conference, sought to reinforce the AKP's vision of an activist Turkey, reaching out for influence not only in its region, but globally. Widely viewed as the architect of that ambitious vision, Davutoglu appears to be making good progress selling it to a conservative generation of Turkish diplomats that had been schooled to view Turkey's Ottoman past as a debilitating constraint on their latitude, especially when posted to the former imperial territories of the Balkans and Middle East. As Davutoglu urges his senior diplomats to view the world and its crises not as risks for Turkey, but as opportunities to expand Turkish power, he is simultaneously lobbying for the budgetary resources that would accommodate a dramatic expansion of his ministry's staff. Central to that expansion would be the recruitment of young diplomats whose formative years have been conditioned by the political stability of successive AKP governments, transformative domestic economic growth, the near abandonment of Turkey's centuries-old perception of Russia as implacable threat and an attendant weakening of the decades-old perception of the the United States as indispensible protector.

13. (C) According to media sources, Davutoglu's opening session speech prescribed six "dimensions" to guide his ambassadors in their conduct of Turkish foreign relations:

-- "Intellectual Dimension," A Shared Vision for Turkey: Davutoglu rhetorically asked his ambassadors: "What kind of Turkey do we want?" Identifying the year 2023, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic, as a target date, Davutoglu said he wants a Turkey that is a member of the EU, has assumed "an effective role" in its neighborhood and "an active role" globally, and has joined the ranks of the world's 10 largest economies. (NOTE: Though our very secular MFA contacts are unlikely to vote for the Islamist AKP, Davutoglu's optimistic nationalist vision resonates with them, especially since they have a starring roll in realizing it. END NOTE)

-- "Psychological Dimension," Patient Self-confidence: Davutoglu urged his ambassadors to be realistic in their expectations and, consistent with his first point, implied their efforts to realize their shared vision would encounter hindrances and frustrations. (COMMENT: Some of our MFA contacts discreetly worry their energetic and peripatetic minister is prone to diplomatic overstretch. MFA staff are working very long hours in an effort to keep up with Davutoglu's proliferating strategic partnership initiatives and mediation efforts. The consensus, however, appears to be that he is establishing the bilateral and regional formats and structures that Turkey will use, as it realizes its potential, to exert its influence. Convinced Turkey is on a

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steep upward trajectory economically, most MFA contacts contend it will grow sooner, rather than later, into the structures Davutoglu is now busily establishing. END COMMENT)

-- "Rhetorical Dimension": Davutoglu urged his ambassadors to abandon trade-speak and circumlocution and speak clearly to the Turkish people. (NOTE: Turkish ambassadors and the MFA ranks have long thought of themselves as an elite possessed of a privileged understanding of international issues. They may find justifying foreign policy to Turkish voters an unfamiliar and uncomfortable exercise. END NOTE)

-- "National Dimension": Davutoglu told his ambassadors foreign policy is no longer the preserve of diplomats. Alluding to the prevalence of cross-cutting and highly technical issues in international relations, he urged his ambassadors towards management of multi-agency teams that draw on the competencies of ministries in addition to the MFA. (NOTE: The High-Level Strategic Cooperation Councils Turkey recently established with Iraq and Syria, both of which involved counterparts meetings between up to eight pairs of ministers and the signing of dozens of MoUs, will be an early test of the MFA's ability to manage a multi-agency foreign policy effort. END NOTE)

-- "International Dimension": Suggestive of Ankara's diminished threat perception, Davutoglu invited his ambassadors to view even regional crises first as opportunities to assert Turkey's profile and cultivate influence, especially as mediators. He noted Turkey's proximity to crises gives it a perspective on important events valued by great powers. (COMMENT: Davutoglu is practising what he preaches. From Somalia to Bosnia to Iran, he has engaged his diplomats in recent mediation efforts that can parallel and distract from established fora. Results have not been impressive, but Davutoglu remains undeterred. We expect him to continue to peddle Turkey's good offices around the region and beyond. END COMMENT)

-- "Institutional Dimension": Focussing on his stewardship of the ministry's budgetary resources, Davutoglu described an MFA that is investing in the intellectual capital of its staff through language and post-graduate training and expanding Turkey's presence abroad by opening new consulates

and embassies. (NOTE: The ministry clearly needs more diplomats. Our visibly tired Turkish colleagues are often juggling several portfolios. END NOTE)

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Despite their workload, our MFA contacts, for the most part, seem inspired by Davutoglu and excited by his activism. They reserve their candid criticism for Prime Minister Erdogan, his emotional inclination to exceed his talking points and his staff's frequent failure to back brief the MFA on his meetings with international counterparts.

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